

REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1, 3-6 and 8-10 have been amended. Thus, claims 1-10 are now active in the application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

On pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Suzuki et al. (U.S. 6,233,986). This rejection is believed clearly inapplicable to the claims as presently presented, for the following reasons.

With exemplary reference to the present drawing figures, each of the independent claims 1 and 6 has now been amended to specify: that the protrusion blocking device 4 comprises a protrusion blocking plunger 42 movable between an extended position (e.g. Fig. 8B) in which the plunger 42 is engagable with the blocking device receiving portion 15 and a retracted position (e.g. Fig. 7B) in which the plunger 42 is withdrawn from the blocking device receiving portion 15; that the protrusion blocking device 4 further comprises an electric safety motor 41 which is operable, upon activation, to perform a plunger withdrawal operation for withdrawing the protrusion blocking plunger 42 from the extended position to the retracted position in order to withdraw the protrusion blocking plunger 42 from the blocking device receiving portion 15 so as to allow protrusion of the lock shaft 1 to the protruded position (e.g. Figs. 1 and 6A); and that the holding part 15a comprises an engagement portion formed on the lock shaft 1 and arranged to prevent the protrusion blocking plunger 42 from being withdrawn from the blocking device receiving portion 15 even upon activation of the electric safety motor 41 to perform a plunger withdrawal operation for withdrawing the protrusion blocking plunger 42, to thereby prevent movement of the lock shaft 1 from the retracted position (e.g. Fig. 8A) to the protruded position (e.g. Fig. 6A) due to an electrical malfunction.

Thus, each of the independent claims 1 and 6 makes clear that, even if the electric safety motor (e.g., solenoid) 41 (Fig. 5) is inadvertently activated due to an electrical malfunction, for example, the electric safety motor 41 will not be able to withdraw the protrusion blocking plunger 42 from the receiving portion 15 due to the engagement portion 15a. Accordingly, even

if an electrical malfunction causes the solenoid 41 to attempt to withdraw the plunger 42 from the receiving portion 15, the protrusion blocking plunger 42 will not be withdrawn from the receiving portion 15 due to the engagement portion 15a (see Fig. 8B). thereby preventing the lock shaft 1 from moving to a protruded position in which it locks the steering shaft.

This is clearly not the case in the Suzuki et al. patent. Although Suzuki et al. discloses a protrusion blocking device including member 45a which engages in slot 14b of the lock shaft 13, there is clearly no suggestion in Suzuki et al. of an engagement portion formed on the lock shaft and arranged to prevent the protrusion blocking plunger from being withdrawn from the blocking device receiving portion even upon activation of an electric safety motor to perform a plunger withdrawal operation for withdrawing the protrusion blocking plunger, to thereby prevent movement of the lock shaft from the retracted position to the protruded position due to an electrical malfunction, as now specifically required by each of claims 1 and 6.

Instead, in Suzuki et al., if an electrical malfunction were to cause the electric drive means (referred to at column 11, lines 9-12) to perform a withdrawal operation to withdraw the engagement member 45a from the slot 14b of the lock shaft 13, then such withdrawal would occur; there is no engagement portion similar to that of the present invention that would prevent such withdrawal.

Thus, in view of the above, it is believed clear that the Suzuki et al. patent does not anticipate the present invention as recited in either of claims 1 and 6. Furthermore, these differences are clearly such that a person of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated to modify the Suzuki et al. patent or to make any combination of the references of record in such a manner as to result in or otherwise obvious the present invention as recited in either of claims 1 and 6. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and 6, as well as claims 2-5 and 7-10 which respectively depend therefrom, are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance. An early notice thereof is earnestly solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Keisuke FUKUSHIMA

By: 

Charles R. Watts

Registration No. 33,142

Attorney for Applicant

CRW/asd
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
February 23, 2005